

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1           1.     A piston ring for covering a circumferential surface of a piston,  
2     comprising a lateral surface for covering the circumferential surface of the piston and  
3     support segments having retaining surfaces for engaging the top and bottom of the  
4     piston, wherein said piston ring defines a joint between ends thereof allowing the piston  
5     ring to be elastically deformed in the radial direction, a first tongue arranged on one of  
6     said ends of said piston ring, said first tongue engaging an opening defined in the other  
7     of said ends of said piston ring, wherein said first tongue includes retaining segments  
8     which comprise extensions of said support elements in the circumferential direction,  
9     said retaining segments supportively engagable with the top and bottom of the piston for  
10    axially supporting said first tongue, said piston ring further comprising carrier segments  
11    arranged proximate the opening as extensions of said support segments for axially  
12    supporting said other of said ends of said piston ring, said carrier segments being  
13    supported on the retaining segments, said piston ring comprising a sealing surface  
14    between the ends of said piston ring for preventing damping fluid from flowing through  
15    the joint between the top of the piston and the bottom of the piston.

1           2.     The piston ring of claim 1, wherein said piston ring further includes  
2     a second tongue at said joint which engages a second opening.

1           3.     The piston ring of claim 2, wherein said second tongue is in series  
2     with said first tongue.

1           4.     The piston ring of claim 2, wherein said second tongue is arranged  
2 in said other of said ends and the second opening is defined in said one of said ends,  
3 wherein said second tongue is oriented in a direction opposite that of said first tongue.

1           5.     The piston ring of claim 4, wherein said second tongue is shorter in  
2 the circumferential direction of said piston ring than said first tongue.

1           6.     The piston ring of claim 2, wherein said second tongue is shorter in  
2 the circumferential direction of said piston ring than said first tongue.

1           7.     The piston ring of claim 2, wherein each of said first and second  
2 tongues extend all the way from one of the axial sides of said piston ring to the sealing  
3 surface, and wherein both of said first and second tongues have said supporting  
4 segments with said retaining surfaces which engage the top and bottom of the piston.

1           8.     The piston ring of claim 7, wherein said piston ring gap has a  
2 stepped contour at least within the axial extent of the lateral surface.

1           9.     The piston ring of claim 2, wherein said first tongue extends from  
2 said one of said ends of the piston ring to said sealing surface and said second tongue  
3 extends from said other one of said ends to said sealing surface, and wherein both of  
4 said first and second tongues have said supporting segments with said retaining  
5 surfaces which engage the top and bottom of the piston.